

Senate Bill 295
February 17, 2015
Presented by Mike Korn
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Mike Korn, Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I am here today on behalf of the Director in opposition to Senate Bill 295.

For at the least the last two legislative sessions, FWP has appeared in opposition to this bill or ones just like it. Our opposition is not based on the simple use of suppressors. Our own agency, in fact, utilizes suppressed .22 caliber rifles in the course of handling urban wildlife issues in cities and towns in Montana. Suppressors on these rifles using sub-sonic ammunition are an effective means of dispatching both injured and problem deer, while minimizing disruption in an urban setting.

Neither does our opposition stem from the potential for the illegal use of these accessories. We have had a handful of cases where suppressors were used for poaching or other illegal activities. In most of those cases, the suppressors themselves were illegal, not having paid the requisite tax through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Suppressors do reduce rifle report, which for both landowners and wardens has been a way to determine that someone is hunting in a particular area.

We oppose this bill on the basis of need and also on the fact that it will be used to tarnish those who hunt big game in the state. The issue is perception- and like it or not, suppressors- or silencers- have a lot of very bad baggage. That baggage is not going to be shed by the legalization of them for big game hunting in Montana. Non-hunters and many hunters believe that suppressors are the domain of those who have something to hide, and they are not interested in perpetuating that notion.

Suppressors are legal at this time in Montana, for general shooting and for the shooting of non-game animals and predators such as coyotes, prairie dogs and gophers. However, in these situations, the shooter is often subjected to the repeated report of a rifle or pistol.

We face numerous new technological advances that pose to radically alter the face of big game hunting. FWP believes that allowing suppressors for big game hunting will contribute to these concerns, and will only serve to fuel the fires of those who wish to radically alter, if not eliminate hunting. We urge a Do Not Pass on SB 295. We will be available for questions.

SENATE FISH AND GAME

1. The following is a list of the fish and game which have been introduced into the State of California since the year 1850, and which are now found in the State.